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ABSTRACT

The reading comprehension program described in this lesson introduces the components of think-alouds and text interactions, and helps students to develop the ability to use think-alouds to aid in reading comprehension tasks. During two 45-minute lessons, students will: explore the use of the think-aloud strategy; vocalize interactions with texts; discuss connections between texts and previously acquired knowledge; use various types of responses to interact with texts; and assess personal level of comprehension. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A think aloud interactive and a think-aloud rubric are attached. (PM)

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Building Reading Comprehension Through Think-Alouds

ED 479 060

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Two 45-minute sessions

Overview

Studies have shown that the think-aloud strategy improves reading comprehension on tests. Through this lesson, the teacher will model the think-aloud strategy for students. Components of think-alouds will be introduced, as well as type of text interactions. Students will develop the ability to use think-alouds to aid in reading comprehension tasks.

From Theory to Practice

Baumann, J.F., Jones, L.A., & Seifert-Kessell, N. (1993). Using think alouds to enhance children's comprehension monitoring abilities. *The Reading Teacher, 47,* 184-193.

- The intent behind the think-aloud lessons was to help students develop the ability to monitor their reading comprehension and employ strategies to guide or facilitate understanding.
- Think-alouds require a reader to stop periodically, reflect on how a text is being processed and understood, and relate orally what reading strategies are being employed.

Oster, L. (2001). Using the think-aloud for reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 55,* 64-69.

- The think-aloud is a technique in which students verbalize their thoughts as they read and thus bring into the open the strategies they are using to understand a text.
- This metacognitive awareness (being able to think about one's own thinking) is a crucial component of learning, because it enables learners to assess their level of comprehension and adjust their strategies for greater success.
- Several studies have shown that students who verbalize their reading strategies and thoughts while reading score significantly higher on comprehension tests.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Explore the use of the think-aloud strategy
- Vocalize interactions with texts
- Discuss connections between texts and previously acquired knowledge
- Use various types of responses to interact with texts

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- Assess personal level of comprehension

Resources

- Think-Aloud online worksheet
- Rubric
- Chart paper
- Computer with Internet access
- Selection of poems to use during modeling and class activities
- Teacher resources for think-aloud strategies:

  NCELA website

  Reading Lady.com

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Create overhead transparencies of the poems you select to use for modeling and classroom activities.
2. Review teacher resource websites provided to gain a better understanding of modeling think-alouds in the classroom.
3. Review the two articles referenced for theoretical background to develop a strong knowledge base of the benefits of think-alouds in the classroom.

Instruction and Activities

Day 1

Initiation — Present the term "think-aloud" to your students. Have them brainstorm what they think it might mean. Ask students to report how it might be applied to reading.

Modeling — Model a think-aloud by presenting a poem on the overhead. As you read each line out loud to the students, stop and vocalize "thinking aloud" about the poem.

Example — This is a think-aloud for the poem "Dream Variation" by Langston Hughes.

> To fling my arms wide
>
> In some place of the sun,
>
> To whirl and to dance
>
> Till the white day is done.

[*I'm picturing a young girl with bare feet and a summer dress twirling in her front yard with her arms outstretched.*]

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Then rest at cool evening

Beneath a tall tree

[*I'm picturing a large willow tree and sitting underneath it. Fireflies are blinking among the branches.*]

While night comes on gently,

Dark like me—

[*I've now gone back to my original picture of a young girl and change the image to show skin of color. I'm also thinking about the words "white day" and how they contrast with the words "night" and "dark."*]

That is my dream!

[*I think about how children's lives are so filled with dreams. This young girl seems to be free spirited and probably has many dreams.*]

To fling my arms wide

In the face of the sun,

Dance! Whirl! Whirl!

[*I once again see the image of the young girl twirling in her yard and how free she is...like she is flying.*]

Till the quick day is done.

Rest at pale evening...

[*Hmmm...This poem includes several words that relate to color--white, dark, and pale. I wonder if the poet is trying to make a point about color.*]

A tall, slim tree...

Night coming tenderly

Black like me.

[*There is another color word--black. I think the poet has some kind of hidden meaning here but I'm not sure what it is. The poem seems to portray freedom. Maybe the title "Dream Variation" helps make this point. Is this poem about slavery and the only way to be free is in a dream? I think that I might want to look up some information about the author and the date that this poem was published. That might help me to understand it better.*]

Model with student interactions — Model a second poem and ask for students to volunteer what they are thinking after each line or stanza. Record their responses on the transparency.

Brainstorming — Ask students to recognize different types of responses from the two models of think-alouds. List these responses on chart paper. Responses can include but are not limited to the following:

- Imagery/visual responses
- Making connections to personal experiences

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- Making connections to other texts
- Predictions
- Stating understanding or confusion

Discuss how all of these responses can help students better understand/comprehend what they are reading.

Day 2

Preparation — Type the list of think-aloud responses from the previous lesson and distribute to each student at the beginning of class.

Small group — Put students into groups of three or four. Distribute copies of a poem that is unfamiliar to each group. Direct students to read the poem and use the think-aloud strategy that was presented. Each group should record the types of responses that were used.

Whole group — Have each group report the types of responses that were used. Record these on the chart paper from the previous lesson by placing tally marks next to the strategy. Make comparisons of what responses are used most commonly within the classroom.

Computer lab — Have students use the Think-Aloud online worksheet to practice using the think-aloud strategy presented.

Follow-up activity — Discuss the types of responses that are used most often. Ask students what they could do to increase comprehension of a particular text. Explain how students can use the think-aloud technique to assess their comprehension of a text. Ask students what responses they could use to help them read their content area textbooks versus fictional literature.

Extensions

Provide students with different types of texts to further explore and practice using think-alouds. Suggestions include short stories (fiction or nonfiction) and excerpts from content area texts. Students can work in either small groups or independently to read the selected text using the think-aloud strategy.

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Teacher observation of students' uses of think-aloud strategy.
- Students' abilities to use various think-aloud responses to assist with comprehension.
- Rubric

IRA/NCTE Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their

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knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

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Think Aloud Interactive

The Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America

and to the Republic for which it stands,

one Nation under God, indivisible,

with liberty and justice for all.

Check off which type(s) of responses you used above.

- ☐ Imagery/visual responses
- ☐ Making connections to personal experiences
- ☐ Making connections to other texts
- ☐ Predictions
- ☐ Stating understanding
- ☐ Stating confusion

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Think-Aloud Rubric

Student name _____

Think-aloud response types	5-6 different response types	3-4 different response types	1-2 different response types
Imagery/Visual responses			
Making connections to personal experiences			
Making connections to other texts			
Predictions			
Stating understanding			
Stating confusion			
Score	**3**	**2**	**1**

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